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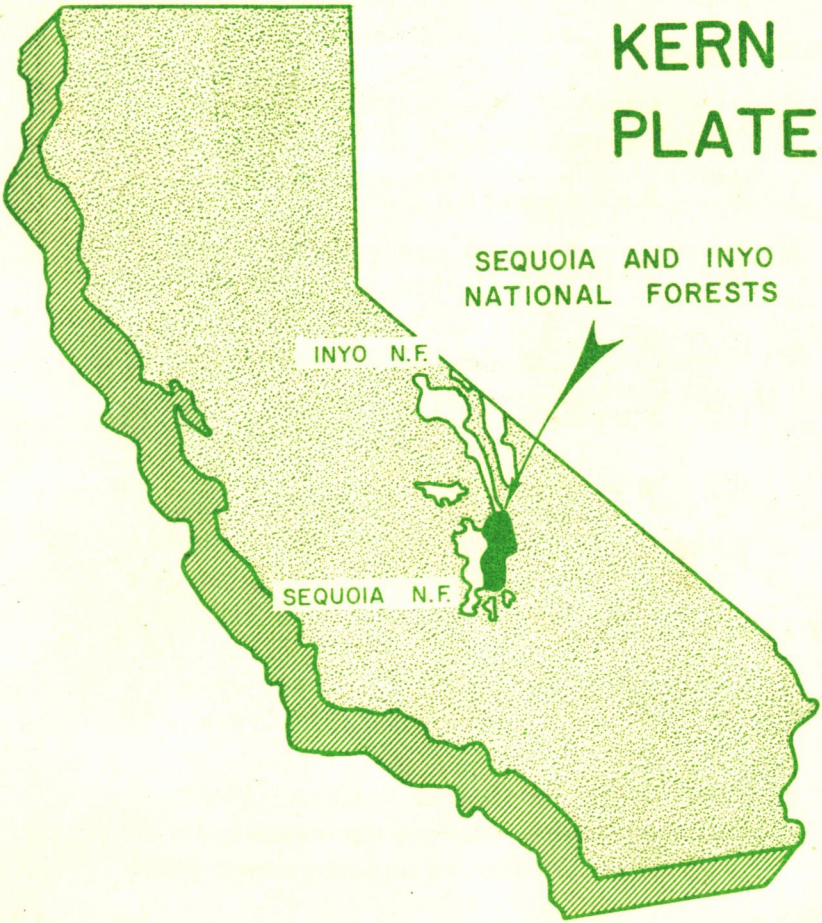
MULTIPLE-USE MANAGEMENT

ON THE

KERN PLATEAU



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE - CALIFORNIA REGION
1959

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BRIEF FACTS

An area of about 580,000 acres lying east of the Kern River within the Sequoia and Inyo National Forests - a storehouse of national forest resources.

Studies over the past 20 years have shown the area to be well suited for multiple-use management.

Kern Plateau has never been classified as a wilderness area.

Multiple-use policy can contribute greatly to meeting the demand for forest recreation.

Planned recreation facilities can give camping, picnicking, and other outdoor enjoyment to more than 55,000 people on a typical summer day.

Multiple-use policy will permit salvage of insect-infested timber.

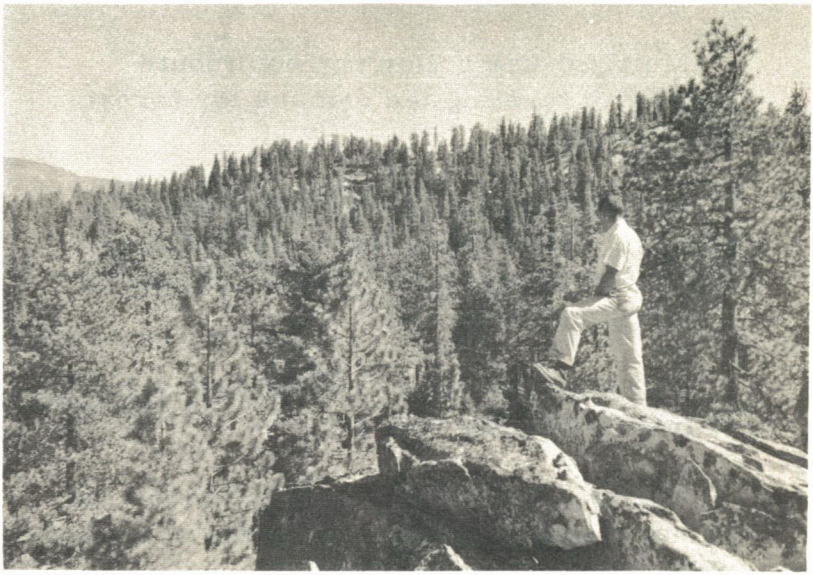
Thirty million board feet of timber can be harvested each year under the sustained-yield management program.

Approximately 4,000 head of livestock harvest the forage crop each summer.

Dome Land, in the southeast portion, is currently being considered as a wild or scenic area for protection of its unique features.

Over 200 miles of fishing streams exist on the Plateau.

The Kern Plateau watershed will be protected and improved under multiple-use management.



Scenic values of Kern Plateau will be protected and enjoyed by thousands. This area just across Kern River was logged in 1958. Picture taken spring 1959.

BACKGROUND

The Kern Plateau is located at the southern tip of the Sierra Nevada. It is bounded on the north by Sequoia National Park, on the west by the Kern River, on the east and south by the South Fork of the Kern River.

The Kern Plateau is an area of timbered basins, mountain meadows, and high granite domes. The bulk of the Plateau ranges from 6000 - 9000 feet in elevation.

Since 1905 the area has been administered by the U. S. Forest Service. Up to the present time use of the natural resources of the area has been limited to grazing, hunting, fishing, pioneering type of recreational activity and some mining. In recent years studies have been made and plans developed for more intensive multiple-use management of the Kern Plateau. Recreation, timber, range, wildlife, water and soil have received careful consideration. A comprehensive multiple-use plan has been initiated.

Two different proposals for managing these national forest lands have been considered. One has been that the resources on the Kern Plateau remain undeveloped and that the area be protected and maintained in its natural state as a wilderness area. The other is multiple-use management, which provides for orderly development and use of all the resources for the greatest over-all public benefits.

Decisions by two Secretaries of Agriculture, first in 1946 and again in 1956, have been that Kern Plateau was best suited to multiple-use management. In addition, the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry directed that an investigation be made on the use of the area. The report of the investigation advocated no change from the earlier decisions to apply multiple-use management. Multiple-use management requires road construction for timber production and harvest, for hunting and fishing access, and for general recreation use.

Kern Plateau is located within a few hours' drive for millions of California people. The demand for public recreation sites such as campgrounds and organization camps far exceeds the supply. Making the Kern Plateau area accessible by roads will help materially to meet this need.

RESOURCES

A. Recreation

This Plateau area by virtue of its location and scenic attractions is well suited to accomodate thousands of recreationists.

California now has over 15,000,000 inhabitants. It is estimated that 60% of the population lives within four hours' drive of the Kern Plateau. In addition, the annual crop of out-of-state tourists visiting California amounts to well over four million individuals. Thus the public demand for recreation areas ever increases. Development of the Kern Plateau by building of roads, campgrounds, and other improvements will help materially in meeting the recreation demand.

A typical east side pine area being developed for intensive recreation use. (Inyo National Forest) Human hazardous trees have been harvested to protect users. Trees which were a "high risk" to insect and disease attack have been removed to protect the healthy trees - needed for shade and beauty.

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EXPERIMENT STATION

Recreation facilities will be installed at designated areas.

When planned recreation development on the Kern Plateau is attained the area can handle 55,000 recreationists on a daily basis.

This gentle terrain is ideally suited to family camping and for vacationers of all groups.

Five main roads are planned to serve the Plateau. Recreation development is tied directly to these roads and their construction schedules.

Two special areas are included in the Plateau. They are the Dome Land and Little Whitney. These are well adapted for back-country type of use. Dome Land is characterized by steep, rough slopes, and picturesque rock outcroppings. The principal vegetation is pinyon and Jeffrey pine with an understory of buckbrush, sagebrush and rabbitbrush. Trails will be improved in the Dome Land for recreation use. Some 68,000 acres is currently being classified for primitive recreation and enjoyment of its special attractions.

Dome Land - an area of picturesque rock outcroppings.

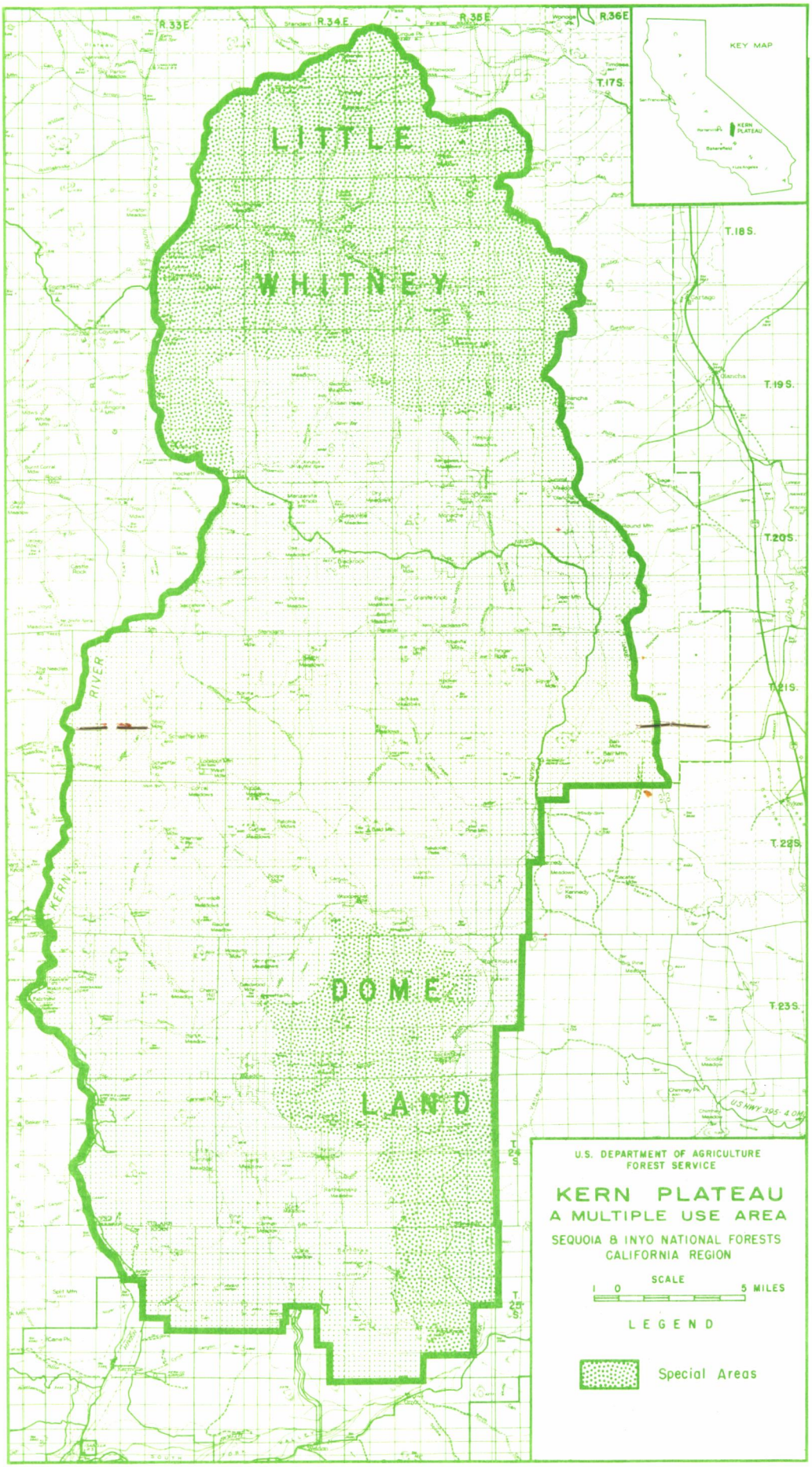
Little Whitney is the higher portion of the Plateau ranging in elevation from 6,000 to 12,000 feet. Numerous natural meadows exist along the stream courses and bottom lands. A system of trails and landing fields provides access. Restricted or limited road access maybe adopted for at least a portion of the unit. More detailed study is necessary prior to final development of a land use plan.

B. Timber

The Kern Plateau contains about 157,000 acres of commercial forest land. The Sequoia National Forest has approximately 119,000 acres and the Inyo National Forest contains 38,000 acres. This mature virgin forest ranges from open pine stands on flats and south slopes to heavy fir stands on the north slopes. Jeffrey pine, white fir, and red fir are the three dominant trees growing on the Plateau.

A stand of Jeffrey Pine ready for harvest. Leaning trees, dead and dying trees, trees past their prime, and those most susceptible to insect attack, and disease will be marked for cutting.

Heavy losses from insects and disease have occurred in the older trees during recent years. The planned commercial timber use and development of the Kern Plateau calls for harvesting of diseased and insect-infested trees, along with groups of trees past their prime of life. This type of harvesting with commercial thinning will help protect the balance of the forest by reducing the spread of insects or disease and will allow replacement by young thrifty trees.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LITTLE
WHITNEY
DOME
LAND
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RIVER
KEY MAP
KERN PLATEAU
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
KERN PLATEAU
A MULTIPLE USE AREA
SEQUOIA & INYO NATIONAL FORESTS
CALIFORNIA REGION
SCALE
1 0 5 MILES
LEGEND
Special Areas

A stand of Jeffrey Pine showing continuing loss from bark beetles - notice the four dead trees in the photo - the one on the right died this year (1959).

The planned sustained-yield timber harvest of about 30-million board feet per year will provide enough timber to the nation's wood supply to construct over 3,000 average sized homes each year - - - new homes for approximately 15,000 people.

Harvesting will be done in a manner which will provide the best protection to soil, lakes, and streams.

Wood chipping machines will be used to clear many areas of fire hazardous slash.

Use of the timber crop will allow for the early development of recreation facilities so sorely needed by providing the roads necessary for public access.

Salvaging of the insect-infested and over-mature trees helps avoid a waste of wood as well as aid in control of epidemics.

C. Water

The precipitation pattern of the Kern Plateau shows a range of from about 45 inches at the north end of the Little Kern drainage to ten inches at the southeast portion of the Cannell Meadow. The high rolling country making up the bulk of the area falls in the 25-35 inch zone.

The Kern Plateau is important for water production. Many of the smaller streams draining the Plateau have use not only as fishing streams, but also for livestock and wildlife. These secondary streams with their small impoundments appeal to recreationists.

The water which comes from the Kern Plateau has a high value for downstream power and irrigation. Four hydro-electric plants on the main Kern River use water which comes from this Plateau. Every acre-foot is used for fishing, boating, swimming, and irrigation or domestic use.

The administrative policy of the Kern Plateau will be directed toward preserving the integrity of the watershed and increasing its water production, storage, and flood control potential.

Kern River above Kern Flat. Sustained high quality and quanitities of water production is a major part of the multiple-use management of national forest lands.

D. Forage

Mountain meadows are scattered throughout the high plateau country along the stream courses and extensive mountain valleys. About one-third of the meadow land area is privately owned.

The forage produced on these meadow lands, together with some fringe types of timber and sagebrush lands, provide summer range for approximately 4,000 head of cattle and numerous deer. These 4,000 head of cattle consume about 10,000 tons of forage which results in over 500,000 pounds of beef production.

Mountain meadows will continue to support livestock. Meadow areas will not be disturbed by logging practices.

The ranges have been grazed for over 70 years. During the early period before grazing use was regulated, over-stocking and too early grazing caused serious damage to the forage resources and the watershed. Adjustments in grazing use and seasons have been made, but erosion scars still remain to be repaired.

Utilization of the forage by grazing will continue to be an important use in the over-all multiple-use program. Considerable opportunity for range development by reseeding, brush eradication, and other cultural treatments will develop when roads are built so machinery and materials can be used economically.

Erosion of this draw has been checked by structures and vegetation. Stream channel stabilization work will intensified when access roads are constructed into the Plateau.

E. Wildlife

Kern Plateau is a natural habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Numerous streams and several lakes support fishlife.

The California mule deer is the most common species and is found throughout the area. Other wildlife present are bear, fisher, mink, and several predator species such as coyotes, wildcats, and mountain lion. Beaver have been planted in several areas. A small band of Sierra bighorn mountain sheep range in the extreme northern end of the area.

Mountain quail and grouse are native to the Plateau. Turkeys have been successfully introduced.

Most of the main streams are good fishing waters.

More widespread use of the wildlife resources can be achieved as the development progresses. Habitat can be managed and improved to favor game, birds, and fish.

F. Minerals

A limited amount of mining has been going on for a number of years.

Several thousand acres of the Kern Plateau are recognized as mineralized zones.

With the improved access on the Plateau for multiple-use, mineral exploration and development will continue.

FIRE CONTROL

Numerous lightning fires occur each year on the Kern Plateau. The largest fire on record burned over 23,000 acres in 1942.

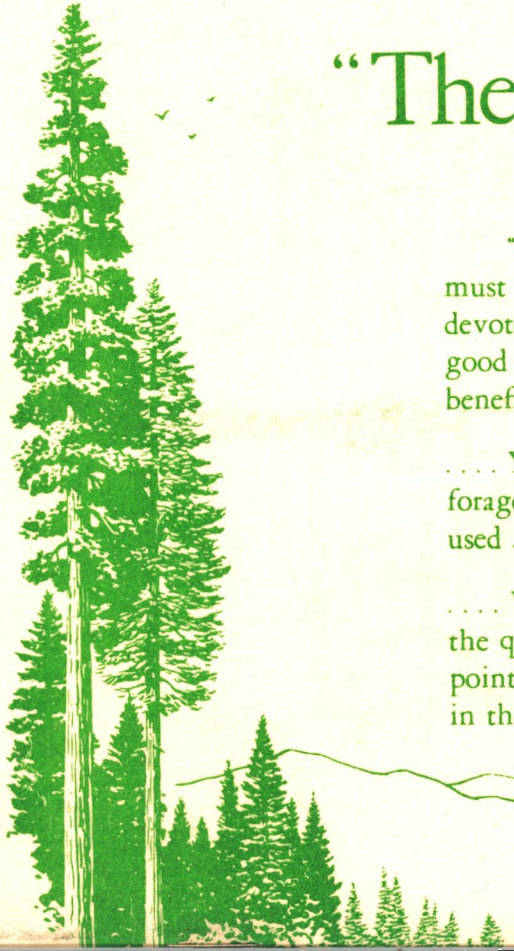
There are a few makeshift airplane landing fields for use, but, on the whole, present travel throughout the area is slow. Follow-up fire fighting crews must go in by foot or horse and use the existing trail system for access.

The development of the Kern Plateau on a multiple-use basis will allow for faster access for fire fighters to reach the fires and will give them a better chance of keeping fires small.

SUMMARY

New resource inventories and plans for recreation and timber were completed in 1959. These inventory data and studies of the other resources form the basis for the revision of the Multiple-Use Management Plan for Kern Plateau. They give consideration to the needs of an expanding population. They afford the best known integration, protection, and use of the recreation, water, wood, forage, soil and wildlife resources. These plans are "tailor made" for the particular soils, plant communities, topography, climate, and geographic situation on Kern Plateau.

The properly balanced development of the Kern Plateau under this intensified multiple-use forest-land management plan is an urgent and constructive step which the U. S. Forest Service is taking for the "greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."



"The Greatest Good"

"In the administration of the forest reserves it must be clearly borne in mind that all land is to be devoted to the most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people and not for the temporary benefit of individuals or companies . . . .

. . . . You will see to it that the water, wood, and forage of the reserves are conserved and wisely used . . . .

. . . . Where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

From letter of Secretary James Wilson to Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester, February 1, 1905, outlining policies for the administration of the forest reserves (now national forests) by the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture